

DEATHS "ATTRIBUTED" TO SMOKING:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Numbers of excess deaths allegedly caused by cigarette smoking are based solely on statistical associations and tell nothing about whether an individual smoker's lung cancer is "due to" smoking or some other factor or even whether particular smokers in a group of lung cancer patients "develop" the disease because of smoking.

-- Calculations of excess deaths "due to" smoking have been subject to scientific criticism over the years throughout the world. Such numbers have been referred to as "fanciful extrapolations"¹ and as belonging "to the realm of fantasy."²

-- The data from which such numbers are calculated suffer from biases and variations inherent in any statistical data. Even the 1989 U.S. Surgeon General's Report has acknowledged the "uncertainties" in calculating attributable risks.³

-- An attributable risk percentage for smoking does not and cannot take into account any agent or factor other than smoking for the disease in question.

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-- The results of intervention studies raise serious challenges regarding any claim of excess deaths from heart disease "due to" smoking.

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REFERENCES

1. Rosenblatt, M.B., Statement, Re: Cigarette Labeling and Advertising - 1969." In: Hearings before the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, U.S. House of Representatives, Ninety-First Congress, First Session, 1255-1271 (at 1256), April 15-18, 21-25, 28-30, and May 1, 1969.
2. Burch, P.R.J., "Can Epidemiology Become a Rigorous Science? How Big is the Big Kill?," IRCS Journal of Medical Sciences 14: 956-961 (at 960), October, 1986.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office on Smoking and Health, "Changes in Smoking-Attributable Mortality." In: Reducing the Health Consequences of Smoking: 25 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General: 1989. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, DHHS Publication No. (CDC) 89-8411, Chapter 3, 117-169 (at 127), 1989.

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